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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

ELECTORAL REFORM.

WHEN a great and educated people, who can justly boast of scores of thoroughly equipped statesmen—orators of unequalled power, legislators of experience and sagacity—deliberately nominate and elect, through the machinery of their two chief parties, the one Hayes, and the other Cleveland, it is surely time to cry *Halt!* and to examine into the causes of such ridiculous results. One need not go far to find them. They are the work of petty intriguers who have obtained control of the political machinery of both parties; and, by “manipulating” primaries and bribing or overawing voters, and by secret and corrupt “trades” and “combines,” have gained the power, under our existing system, of defying, falsifying, and otherwise perverting the will of the people. These evils can only be eradicated by a law that shall provide for absolute secrecy of voting, and, at the same time, secure the nomination of honest and able candidates without the intervention and even in defiance of the desires of the “practical politicians,” who now “control” the primaries and nominating conventions and “manage” the elections. Our system of voting is nominally secret; but, practically, it is open. It is easy to discover how any man votes. Working men complain of the dictation of capitalists to their employés, and capitalists complain of the dictation of trades unions to the members of their societies, often, as they claim, to the serious injury of business and private interests.

A project of law, ingeniously adapting what is known as the Australian system to our American institutions, drawn by Mr. Allen Thorndike Rice, recently published, has attracted great attention and elicited wide discussion. It has also entered into the sphere of practical politics by its unanimous adoption by the Committee on Resolutions at the recent Syracuse Convention of the United Labor Party, by which it will be made a prominent issue in the pending State campaign. The delegates to that convention were enthusiastically in favor of it, and Mr. George, the leader of the party, has taken occasion, since the convention, to advocate it with great earnestness. The Republican State Convention has also, since the discussion of this bill, made a similar issue. As the bill completely provides for the eradication of existing defects in our system of nominating and voting, I ask the privilege of putting it on permanent record in the pages of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*. The Resolution as adopted at Syracuse was in these words:

Resolved, That we earnestly recommend the adoption of what is known as the Australian system of elections, by which absolute secrecy of voting is secured, and the members of the next Legislature who shall be chosen at the coming election by

the United Labor Party are hereby requested to urge the passage of the following bill :

AN ACT TO PROMOTE OPEN NOMINATIONS TO OFFICE, and provide greater security for the secrecy of the ballot.

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows :

SECTION I.—In all places where the registration of citizens entitled to vote at an election is authorized by law, the registration shall take place on the second and third Tuesdays of October next preceding the election.

SEC. II.—The registering officers shall receive and print at least five days before the day of registration the names of all the eligible persons who, after the first day of September and before the first Tuesday of October in each year, may be recommended as fitted for the offices to be filled at the ensuing election. The recommendation to be signed by at least — voters of the district who voted at the last election.

SEC. III.—At the time of the registration each citizen registered shall be requested to designate such of the persons so recommended as he may wish to put in nomination for the offices to be filled.

SEC. IV.—If any person shall be thus designated by one-tenth of the persons registered at the last election, his name shall be placed upon the list of candidates whose expenses for election are to be borne by the county as hereinafter mentioned.

SEC. V.—In the event of death after nomination any candidate receiving one-tenth of the indorsement given to the deceased candidate shall, if practically within the power of the registering officers, be placed upon the list of regular candidates.

SEC. VI.—The registering officers shall prepare suitable ballots, in the form now required by law, containing the names of the persons thus nominated, and shall furnish these ballots in sufficient numbers to serve all the voters of the district at the election.

SEC. VII.—The expense of printing these ballots, and of providing polling places for their distribution, and persons to distribute them, shall be borne by the county as other expenses of the election are now borne.

SEC. VIII.—1. The ballots shall be upon white paper without any impression or mark to distinguish one from another except as herein expressly authorized.

2. Every ballot shall have a caption, but such caption shall be printed in one straight line in black ink with plain type of the size generally known as "Great Primer Roman Condensed Capitals." There shall be as many ballots as there are offices to be filled, and the names of all candidates for the same office shall be upon one ballot. Each ballot must be attached to a stub or counterfoil, and the face of the ballot must be in the following form, viz. :

No.

Stub or counterfoil.

1. A. B. of
The counterfoil is
to have a number
to correspond
with that on the
back of the bal-
lot.

1. A. B. of St. or Ave. City.

1. C. D. of St. or Ave. City.

1. E. F. of St. or Ave. City.

1. G. H. of St. or Ave. City.

The form on the back of the ballot must be in the following form, viz. :

No.

Election for.....

18.....

3. It shall be the duty of the officer who furnishes the registry lists as provided by law to furnish also the Chairman of the Board of Inspectors at each polling place, on the morning of the election, a book or books of ballots of the form and characters above described, and also to furnish to the same person the stamp hereinafter directed to be used.

4. After the canvass of the votes the stubs or counterfoils of the ballot-book,

together with all defaced or mutilated ballots and all unused ballots and the stamp, shall be filed in the same manner and at the same time as the poll-list or registry list is required to be filed.

SEC. IX.—1. Each polling place must be furnished with such number of compartments in which electors can mark their votes screened from observation as the Chairman of the Board of Inspectors thinks necessary, so that at least one compartment is provided for every 200 voters. Each compartment must be kept provided with suitable materials for voters to mark their ballots with.

2. Before a ballot is delivered to an elector the number, name, and description of the elector, as stated in the registry list, must be called out and a mark or marks must be placed in the registry list to denote that he has received a ballot or ballots, and the ballot or ballots must there be stamped by the chairman of the Board of Inspectors with the official stamp hereinbefore mentioned. And such official stamp must be changed each year and kept secret by the officers furnishing it, as hereinbefore provided, until the morning of the election, when it must be delivered to the respective chairmen of the Boards of Inspection and to no one else.

3. The elector upon receiving his ballot or ballots must forthwith proceed into one of the compartments of the polling place and there mark his ballot or ballots by marking a line or lines through the names of the candidates for whom he does not wish to vote. He must then fold each ballot so as to conceal the contents and deliver it so folded to one of the inspectors in the presence of the Board, and the same must thereupon be deposited in the ballot-box in the manner now required by law.

4. If the elector inadvertently spoils a ballot he can return it to the chairman of the Board of Inspectors, who must, if satisfied of such inadvertence, give him another.

5. If an elector is incapacitated by blindness or other cause from voting in the manner herein prescribed, he may inform the chairman of the Board of Inspectors of the fact, and thereupon the chairman must go with the elector into the compartment, and cross out the names as directed by the elector.

6. No voter shall take a ballot list out of the polling place nor deposit in the ballot box any other paper than the one given him by the Board of Inspectors.

SEC. X.—Every officer, clerk, or agent, in attendance at a polling station must maintain, or aid in maintaining, the secrecy of the voting in such station, and must not communicate, except for some purpose authorized by law, before the poll is closed, any information as to the name or number on the register of votes or the registry list, of any elector who has not applied for a ballot paper, or voted at that station, or as to the official stamp; and no officer, clerk, agent or other person whatsoever shall interfere with or attempt to interfere with a voter when marking his vote, or otherwise attempt to obtain at the polling station information as to the candidate for whom any voter in such station is about to vote or has voted, or as to the number on the back of the ballot given to any voter at such station. Every officer, clerk, or person in attendance at the counting of the votes must maintain and aid in maintaining the secrecy of the voting, and must not attempt to ascertain at such counting the number on the back of any ballot paper, or communicate any information obtained as to such counting or as to the candidate for whom any vote is given in any particular ballot paper. No person shall directly or indirectly induce any voter to display his ballot after he shall have marked the same, so as to make known to any person the name of the candidate for or against whom he may have voted. No person shall be required, in any legal proceeding relating to the election or return, to state for whom he has voted.

SEC. XI.—Any officer, clerk, or agent in attendance at the polling station, convicted of violating the provisions of this act, shall be guilty of misdemeanor.

SEC. XII.—All acts and parts of acts heretofore passed, so far as the same are inconsistent with the provisions of this act, are hereby repealed.

The most perfect machinery of politics will be of no avail, of course, unless every citizen does his part by a sacred fulfillment of all political duties, chief among which are voting for able and honest men only, and voting without the trammels of ignorance or fear; but we have no right to complain of the evils

wrought by corrupt men and bad laws until we so perfect our political machinery that the will of the people shall be truthfully registered. It is not now so recorded. Even the final remedy of thoroughly educating the people will prove inadequate until this reform is accomplished. Having done all in our power to secure an honest count and honest candidates, if evils shall continue, the only remedy left is given in the famous advice of "Bob Lowe," when Disraeli extended the franchise, "We must educate our masters."

JAMES REDPATH.

II.

A MONETARY WHIM EXPLODED.

MR. EDWARD ATKINSON, in his discussion of "Low Prices, High Wages, Small Profits: What Makes Them?" assumes that the "working classes," so-called, "have steadily gained in the purchasing power of their wages" since 1865, and more especially since 1873, and that the farmers of the country have also prospered during this period, and that, therefore, "instead of attempting to check the fall in prices by tampering with the standard of value or by other empirical devices for making money plenty, it may be expedient to fight it out on this line, even if several more years of so-called depression should follow this determination." Competent critics have ventured to doubt some of Mr. Atkinson's optimistic conclusions, and have also questioned the figures which he gives as the basis of them. But, admitting that a year's wages will buy more of the necessities of life in this country than twenty years ago, it certainly is not true that the "farmers," who he says "number (not including farm laborers) 250 in each 1,000," are as well off with wheat at 70 cents a bushel or corn at 40, as they would be if these products were twice that sum. Mr. Atkinson's conclusion that inventions practically worked out, and, chiefly, greatly improved facilities for transportation have been most important factors in the country's progress, and especially in cheapening many of the necessities of life, is undoubtedly well-founded. But he ignores entirely the increase, amounting to several hundred millions of money in this country, since January 1st, 1878, resulting partly from large importations of gold, partly from making available for monetary purposes a large amount of gold upon the resumption of specie payments, partly from the coinage of our own gold product, and partly from the coinage of about two hundred and fifty millions of silver. In other words, the policy of contraction which prevailed in the period preceding the legislation in 1878 for remonetizing silver, ceased to be operative after that time, and the extension of our great railway system, which Mr. Atkinson recognizes as "the most beneficent factor in the lowering of prices and in raising wages," has been coincident with our increased monetary supply.

Our great Union and Central Pacific railways had their birth in a period of monetary expansion. Even a depreciated paper currency was sufficient to secure their completion, as well as an important beginning of the Northern Pacific. Monetary contraction was the most important factor in bringing about the bankruptcy of the Northern Pacific and a general suspension of railway building throughout the country. This suspension continued as long as the cause lasted.

While it is doubtless true, as the British Royal Commission not long since reported, that one of the important causes of depression in Great Britain has been the appreciation in the value of gold, that cause doubtless affects Great Britain much more than it does the United States, as we have gained the gold which Europe has lost, and at the same time have coined a part of the product of our gold and silver mines to meet, in some measure, our monetary needs. The appreciation of